



Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion

and

Statelessness Network Asia Pacific

Joint Submission to the Human Rights Council at the 35th Session of the
Universal Periodic Review

(Third Cycle, January 2020)

Lao People's Democratic Republic

July 2019

Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion and Statelessness Network Asia Pacific

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Introduction

1. The Statelessness Network Asia Pacific and the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion make this joint submission to the Human Rights Council at the 35th Session of the Universal Periodic Review on the challenges pertaining to citizenship, statelessness and the enjoyment of fundamental human rights in Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR).
2. The Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion¹ is an independent non-profit organisation committed to an integrated, human rights based response to the injustice of statelessness and exclusion through a combination of research, education, partnerships and advocacy. Established in August 2014, it is the first and only global centre committed to promoting the human rights of stateless persons and ending statelessness. The Institute has made over 40 country specific UPR submissions on the human rights of stateless persons, and also compiled summaries of the key human rights challenges related to statelessness in all countries under review under the 23rd to the 34rd UPR Sessions.
3. The Statelessness Network Asia Pacific² is a civil society coalition with the goal of promoting collaboration and information sharing on addressing statelessness in Asia and the Pacific. SNAP is driven by a diverse membership and through direct engagement and contribution from its members and stakeholders, particularly formerly stateless persons, stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness.
4. This submission focuses on:
 - I. Nationality Law Framework;
 - II. Access to birth registration; and
 - III. Treatment of the Hmong Ethnic Group

Lao People's Democratic Republic Universal Periodic Review under the Second Cycle 2015

5. The National Report submitted by Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) pursuant to the Second Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) distributed on 5 November 2014 largely does not discuss the issue of statelessness.³

¹ For more information, see [www.institutesi.org](http://institutesi.org). For more information on the Institute's UPR advocacy, see <http://institutesi.org/projects/human-rights-advocacy>.

² For more information, see <https://www.statelessnessnetworkasiapacific.org/>.

³ Human Rights Council (Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review), *National report submitted in accordance with*

6. The lack of attention for statelessness issues by the National Report can be attributed to Lao PDR's prioritisation of other issues such as human rights for multi-ethnic people, improved governance, socio-economic development and poverty alleviation, food security and nutrition, health and education reforms, and the protection of women and children (including against human trafficking).⁴
7. One important issue in the National Report touching upon the issue of statelessness was the repatriation of the Hmong people from Thailand in 2009. The National Report states that all repatriated persons, "*like any other Lao citizens, are entitled to travel documents such as passports or border passes which many of them have already received*".⁵ Despite this statement, Canada nevertheless expressed concern, during the Interactive Dialogue in the Second Cycle, regarding the condition and treatment of the Hmong people following their repatriation, particularly in relation to freedom of religion and belief.⁶
8. In its National Report for the Second Cycle, Lao PDR made seven commitments.⁷ These are:
 - I. considering accession to human rights conventions, including the Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CED), Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (CMW), and International Labour Organization conventions;
 - II. continuing to translate the provisions of human rights conventions to which it is a party into national policies, laws and regulations, etc.;
 - III. continuing to disseminate information on the constitutional provisions, laws and human rights to which it is a party, as well as recommendations under UPR;
 - IV. striving to fulfil its reporting obligations under its human rights conventions to which it is a party;
 - V. co-operating with the international community within international, regional and bilateral frameworks;
 - VI. considering extending invitation to UN special rapporteurs to visit the country in the future as appropriate; and,
 - VII. actively contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights all over the world.
9. In relation to the commitments mentioned in paragraph 8.I, Lao PDR has not yet acceded to or ratified the CED nor CMW despite it supporting recommendations from reviewing States to do so (for example, from the Netherlands, Argentina, Canada and Spain). The National Report mentions that Lao PDR has signed the CED in 2008 and begun preparations for its early ratification. In July 2019, however, it has yet to do so.
10. In relation to the commitments mentioned in paragraph 8.VI, while Lao PDR has permitted a visit by the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief in 2010, and the Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children in 2019, it has not issued a standing invitation to all United Nations special rapporteurs, only noting (and not supporting) recommendations from reviewing States for it to do so (for example, from Japan, Ghana, Hungary, Netherlands, Latvia,

paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21 - Lao People's Democratic Republic, 21st sess, UN Doc A/HRC/WG.6/21/LAO/1 (5 November 2014).

⁴ Ibid, Chapter IV, Section A.

⁵ Ibid, par 57.

⁶ Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review - Lao People's Democratic Republic*, 29th sess, UN Doc A/HRC/29/7 (23 March 2015), para 61.

⁷ Ibid 3, Chapter IV, Section B.

Norway and Uruguay).⁸

11. The Report of the UPR Working Group on Lao PDR dated 23 March 2015⁹ (Report of the Working Group) included 196 recommendations made by UN Member States, of which Lao PDR has accepted 116.
12. In the Report of the Working Group, Lao PDR stated that they developed the national strategy and plan of action on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics, with a landscaping report conducted to assess potential opportunities for a digital birth registration system.¹⁰
13. As of June 2018, Lao PDR has not yet achieved universal birth registration, with statistics showing that 73% of children under 5 years of age were registered in 2017.¹¹
14. Four recommendations were made by reviewing States in relation to statelessness:
 - I. *"Continue to modernize its birth registration system and improve access to remote locations, and step up efforts to ensure free and universal birth registration"* by Brazil;
 - II. *"Adopt legal and administrative provisions for the issuance of free birth certificates for all children born in the national territory, and for the establishment of civil registry offices in all districts, including rural districts"* by Mexico;
 - III. *"Continue efforts to modernize its birth registration system, and evaluate if more steps are needed to ensure access to universal birth registration in order to ensure the rights of children to nationality is adequately protected"* by Namibia; and,
 - IV. *"Respect all its national and international obligations regarding forcibly displaced persons"* by Switzerland.

Each of these recommendations was supported by Lao PDR.

15. The three concerns most often raised by reviewing States in the Report of the Working Group are listed below. Responses by Lao PDR to the recommendations made by reviewing States in relation to these issues were varied. These are:
 - I. discrimination against minorities and religious groups, with concerns raised by Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Australia, Canada, Hungary and Ireland;
 - II. the disappearance of a civil society activist in 2012 (Sombath Somphone), and the perceived failure to adequately investigate allegations of forced disappearance, with concerns raised by Sweden, Australia, Belgium, Finland, Ireland, Japan, Singapore and the Netherlands; and,
 - III. restrictions on civil society (including in relation to freedom of expression, assembly and association), with concerns raised by Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Australia, Belgium, France and Latvia.
16. Lao PDR has three overdue reports which remain outstanding, despite it supporting a recommendation by Sierra Leone to *"submit their outstanding and long overdue reports to the*

⁸ Human Rights Council, *UPR of Lao PDR - Second Cycle: Thematic list of Recommendations*, accessed at <https://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session21/LA/LaoMatriceRecommendations.pdf>.

⁹ Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review - Lao People's Democratic Republic*, 29th sess, UN Doc A/HRC/29/7 (23 March 2015).

¹⁰ Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review - Lao People's Democratic Republic*, 29th sess, UN Doc A/HRC/29/7 (23 March 2015), para. 108.

¹¹ Lao PDR, *Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (17 July 2018), page 59.

relevant treaty bodies". These are:

- I. a report on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), which became due on 24 March 2015;
- II. a report on the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), which became due on 26 October 2013; and
- III. a report on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which became due on 30 June 2009.

Lao PDR's International Obligations

Human Rights Treaties

17. As a member State of the UN (admitted 14 December 1955), Lao PDR is obliged by the UN Charter to promote 'universal respect for, and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion'.¹² These human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to a nationality in Article 15, are specified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), many of which are also recognised as principles of customary international law.¹³
18. Lao PDR has international obligations to protect the right to a nationality and protect the rights of stateless persons on the basis of other UN and regional treaties to which it is a party. These include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Art. 24.3), the Convention of the Rights of the Child (Arts. 7 and 8), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Art. 5(d)(iii)), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Art. 18) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (Art. 9).
19. Lao PDR is not a party to any of the Optional Protocols of the above-mentioned human rights treaties which relate to the communication of complaints.
20. Lao PDR's ratification of the ICCPR is subject to a reservation in relation to Article 22, and a declaration in relation to Articles 1 and 18. Lao PDR's ratification of the CAT is subject to a reservation in relation to Articles 20 and 30, and a declaration in relation to Articles 1 and 8. The reservations and declarations mentioned above do not directly relate to issues of statelessness.
21. Lao PDR is not a Party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons or the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness;

Concluding Observations by UN Committees

22. Several UN Treaty Bodies (on the core human rights treaties) have also made recommendations to Lao PDR on issues of statelessness. These include recommendations to:
 - I. facilitate timely birth registration of children, especially in rural and remote areas, by conducting awareness-raising campaigns, removing language barriers and deploying

¹² *Charter of the United Nations*, art 55(c). According to Article 56 of the Charter, it is the obligation of all member states of the UN to take "joint and separate action in cooperation with the Organisation for the achievement of the purposes set forth in Article 55."

¹³ International Law Commission, "Draft Articles on Diplomatic Protection with Commentaries", 58th session, Yearbook of the International Law Commission, Vol. II, Part Two, 2006, p. 49.

- mobile civil registration units;¹⁴
- II. further raise awareness about the importance of birth registration, as well as simplify the procedure, including by continuing to establish mobile registration structures, eliminate hidden fees and costs associated with registration that negatively affect birth registration rates, and allocate adequate human and financial resources;¹⁵
 - III. continue and strengthen its measures to ensure that all children, including children from Hmong-Mien households, are registered at birth (noting that birth registration among Hmong-Mien households is particularly low), and implement a mechanism to monitor national and international adoptions, including by ratifying the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Inter-Country Adoption;¹⁶ and,
 - IV. continue and strengthen its efforts to ensure the birth registration of all children through measures such as mobile units, including children living in remote areas and villages and children in street situations, remove all impediments to universal access to birth registration procedures, allocate adequate human, technical and financial resources to computerising its system for birth registration, and seek international assistance (such as from UNICEF or the UN) to ensure the computerised and centralised universal registration of births.¹⁷
23. Two of the above-mentioned UN Treaty Bodies specifically commended Lao PDR for its legal framework in relation to acquisition of nationality¹⁸ and for introducing a chapter of fundamental rights in its constitution.¹⁹
24. It should also be noted that the following issues, while not directly related to issues of statelessness, were raised made the Committee on the ICCPR:²⁰
- I. a recommendation for the removal of Lao PDR's reservations and declarations to the ICCPR; and,
 - II. the discrimination against Hmong ethnic group, in relation to land grabbing, arbitrary arrest and detention of protesters and enforced disappearance of individuals (including, Kha Yang, Wuthipong Kachathamakul, Bouavanh Chanhmanivon and Keochay, Kingkeo Phongsely, Somchit, Soubinh, Souane, Sinpasong, Khamstone, Nou, Somkhith, and Sourigna, Somphone Khantisouk and others).

Country visits by Special Procedures

25. Although Lao PDR has not issued a standing invitation to all UN special procedures, it has allowed them on a case by case basis. These special procedures have also led to a number of concerns

¹⁴ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *Concluding observations on the combined eighth and ninth periodic reports of the Lao People's Democratic Republic*, UN Doc CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9 (14 November 2018), par 34.

¹⁵ Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), *Concluding observations on the combined third to sixth periodic reports of the Lao People's Democratic Republic*, UN Doc CRC/C/LAO/CO/3-6 (1 November 2018), par 20 and 24.

¹⁶ Committee on the CRC, *Concluding observations on the report submitted by the Lao People's Democratic Republic under article 12(1) of the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography*, UN Doc CRC/C/OPSC/LAO/CO/1 (3 July 2015), par 21(c) and 22(c).

¹⁷ Committee on the CRC, *Concluding observations on the report submitted by the Lao People's Democratic Republic under article 8(1) of the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict*, UN Doc CRC/C/OPAC/LAO/CO/1 (3 July 2015), par 15.

¹⁸ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *Concluding observations on the combined eighth and ninth periodic reports of the Lao People's Democratic Republic*, UN Doc CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9 (14 November 2018), par 33.

¹⁹ Committee on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, *Concluding observations on the initial report of the Lao PDR*, UN Doc CCPR/C/LAO/CO/1 (23 November 2018), par 3(a).

²⁰ Ibid, par 9, 10 and 19.

being raised in relation to statelessness, including:

- I. the "significant challenges" faced by Lao PDR in relation to birth registration, with a quarter of all children under the age of 5 being unregistered in 2011 to 2012.²¹ Factors contributing to this statistic were stated to include the high proportion of population living in rural areas (68%), high adolescent birth rates (65 births per 1,000 girls aged 15 to 19 in 2014), the relative ease with which an identity document can be modified and the general lack of knowledge of official migration requirements.²²
- II. restrictions on liberty of movement on particular religious persons, including allegations that certain authorities refused to give passports to Christians, preventing them from leaving the country. It should be noted however, that it is also stated that the situation "seems to have vastly improved recently".²³

ASEAN

26. Lao PDR is a member State of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and is a signatory to the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration, ASEAN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, and the ASEAN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Children. Although these declarations are non-binding, it reflects consensus as to the importance of human rights in the region. In particular, the right to nationality is enshrined in article 18 of the 2012 ASEAN Human Rights Declaration. As a member state of ASEAN, Lao PDR has participated in workshops which examined issues relating to statelessness, birth registration and the right to a nationality conducted by the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights and UNHCR in November 2011 and the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection on the Rights of Women and Children in August 2013.²⁴

Nationality Law Framework

Constitution of Lao PDR

27. The Constitution of Lao PDR sets out the fundamental rights and obligations of citizens in Chapter IV (inserted in 2015). Most of the articles in that chapter apply only to "citizens" or "Lao citizens".²⁵
28. The only reference to stateless persons (i.e. apatrids) is in Article 50 of the Constitution of Lao PDR, which states that stateless persons:
- I. are protected by the laws of Lao PDR;
 - II. have a right to file claims, prosecute, sue, request justice or lodge petitions with courts and other organisations of Lao PDR; and

²¹ As mentioned above, but not included by the UN Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic reported a similar number in 2017. Lao PDR, *Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (17 July 2018), page 59.

²² Human Rights Council, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material*, 40th sess, UN Doc A/HRC/40/51/Add.1 (21 January 2019), par 6, 8, 13, 14 and 44.

²³ Asma Jahangir (Human Rights Council), *Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief*, 13th sess, UN Doc A/HRC/13/40/Add.4 (27 January 2010).

²⁴ UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Submission by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees For the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Compilation Report – Universal Periodic Review: Lao People's Democratic Republic*, June 2014, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/54c0d9414.html>.

²⁵ Constitution of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (8 December 2015), accessed on 9 May 2019 at https://www.parliament.go.th/ewtadmin/ewt/ac/ewt_dl_link.php?nid=119&filename=parsystem2.

- III. may earn the right to be rewarded with citizenship if they "*exert great contribution in the protection and building of the nation*".

29. The clause on earning the right to be rewarded with citizenship after a great contribution to the nation has been added with the 2015 amendment of the Constitution.

Decree of the President - On the Promulgation of Law on Lao Nationality

30. Citizenship laws in Lao PDR are largely governed by the Decree of the President (No 35/PO) entered into force on 15 June 2004, "On the Promulgation of Law on Lao Nationality" (Decree).²⁶ Lao PDR does not authorise Lao citizens to hold multiple nationalities.²⁷

31. The Decree generally does not discriminate on the basis of gender, with references primarily being to each "spouse", "parent" or "husband or wife", or otherwise in generally inclusive terms.

32. A number of elements in the Decree are designed so as to prevent a person from becoming stateless by virtue of circumstances outside of the person's control. For example:

- I. marriage or divorce does not alter the person's nationality;²⁸
- II. an individual forfeiture of nationality does not affect the nationality of the person's husband, wife or children;²⁹
- III. where only one parent of a child is a Lao citizen, that child will receive Lao citizenship if one of the following applies:
 - i. they are born in Lao PDR;
 - ii. the other parent is stateless;
 - iii. one parent has a permanent address in Lao PDR; or
 - iv. if neither parent has a permanent address in Lao PDR, the parents choose for the child to have Lao citizenship;³⁰
- IV. where the parents of a child are both stateless, the child will receive Lao citizenship upon request of the parents, provided that the parents permanently reside in Lao PDR and are integrated into the Lao society and culture;³¹
- V. where the identity of a child's parents is unknown, any child found in Lao PDR will be considered a Lao citizen (unless evidence can be found that the parents are foreign citizens);³²
- VI. foreign children adopted by married couples where one spouse is a Lao PDR citizen, may hold Lao citizenship if agreed to by the adoptive parents.³³

33. While the Decree has been commended as being comprehensive in dealing with citizenship, there are still a number of potential areas where the framework may unnecessarily render a person stateless. Some of these risks are set out below:

- I. In various situations where a child is born to parents without (or who relinquish) Lao citizenship (or where only one parent has Lao citizenship), the child's citizenship is tied to

²⁶ Decree On the Promulgation of the Law on Lao Nationality, No. 35/PO (25 May 2004), accessed at [http://www.vientianetimes.org.la/Laws%20in%20English/10.%20Law%20on%20Lao%20Nationality%20\(2004\)%20Eng.pdf](http://www.vientianetimes.org.la/Laws%20in%20English/10.%20Law%20on%20Lao%20Nationality%20(2004)%20Eng.pdf).

²⁷ Ibid, article 3.

²⁸ Ibid 27, article 4.

²⁹ Ibid, article 17.

³⁰ Ibid, article 11, also see article 23.

³¹ Ibid, article 12.

³² Ibid, article 13.

³³ Ibid, article 25.

the parents' nationality, regardless of whether the child is qualified to apply for that foreign citizenship. A similar situation arises where a child is born to unknown foreign parents. In other circumstances, the child's citizenship becomes dependent on the election by the parents. Due to factors such as high adolescent birth rates and the general lack of knowledge and participation by parents in the citizenship registration process, the current framework contains unnecessary risk of children being rendered stateless for circumstances outside the person's control.

- II. A child born to stateless parents will only acquire Lao citizenship if the parents are "integrated into the Lao society and culture". Similarly, a Lao citizen may be subject to having his or her citizenship withdrawn for "dishonouring" the citizenship.³⁴ Without appropriate safeguards, these qualitative measures are prone to abuse by authorities leading to unnecessary and enforced statelessness of persons, particularly where the person is already vulnerable by virtue of his or her status as a stateless person.
- III. A person forfeits his or her Lao citizenship by living outside of Lao PDR for seven years (or not maintaining legal connection with Lao PDR for ten years).³⁵ This article would appear to apply regardless of whether the person has acquired any foreign citizenship.
- IV. A person is required to attend a relevant administrative office in relation to matters regarding citizenship.³⁶ Due to the high proportion of the population living in regional and remote areas, this may be a practical impediment for many.
- V. Stateless or foreign individuals must satisfy 11 separate criteria in applying for Lao citizenship.³⁷ Many of these criteria are unnecessary, are difficult to satisfy (particularly for persons who are already vulnerable by virtue of their status as a stateless person), or may be prone to abuse by authorities without appropriate safeguards. Such criteria may lead to persons being unable to escape from their status as a stateless person. These include:
 - i. being 18 years of age or more;
 - ii. speaking, reading and writing fluently in Lao;
 - iii. possessing evidence of social and cultural integration, and knowledge of and respect for Lao traditions;
 - iv. being in good health, not suffering from any serious infectious disease or drug addiction;
 - v. participating in the protection and development of the country;
 - vi. having established permanent residence in Lao PDR for ten years (reduced to three years for stateless persons);³⁸ and
 - vii. having professions and qualifications and a stable economic status.

Access to birth registration

34. As detailed above, statistics show that a quarter of all children under 5 were not registered between 2011 and 2012. This number has remained stable over the years, and statistics from the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic show that 73% of all children under five years of age being registered in 2017, which leaves a significant proportion of children unregistered.³⁹

³⁴ Ibid 27, article 19.

³⁵ Ibid, article 20.

³⁶ Ibid, article 16.

³⁷ Ibid, article 14.

³⁸ Ibid, article 15.

³⁹ Statistics from Lao People's Democratic Republic, Ministry of Health and Lao Statistics Bureau, Lao Social Indicator

35. In its report for Lao PDR's previous UPR review, the UNHCR has encouraged Laos to consider the possibility of mobile birth registration; no fees for birth registration; and civil status registries be established throughout all districts, including rural districts.⁴⁰ Further, Lao PDR has been conducting assessments as to the potential for introduction of a digital birth registration system.

Treatment of the Hmong Ethnic Group

36. There have been concerning reports in relation to the treatment of certain religions and ethnic groups such as the Hmong people (including some 4,000 Hmong asylum seekers who were repatriated to Lao PDR in the aftermath of the Vietnam War) and Christians. While such discriminatory practices may not directly relate to issues of statelessness, reports that authorities have restricted the ability of movement of such persons, or refused to issue passports are concerning. Such practices may have the effect of denying a person's citizenship. Those who remain undocumented are at risk of being unable to prove their citizenship.

Recommendations

37. Based on the above analysis, the co-submitting organisations urge reviewing States to make the following recommendations to Lao PDR:
- I. Withdraw all reservations to the ICCPR and CAT and accede to all relevant human rights, refugee and statelessness instruments, in particular to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions;
 - II. Identify and close possible gaps in the Nationality Law Framework to ensure no person is rendered stateless, no child born stateless and that the criteria for a stateless person to apply for Lao citizenship are reasonable;
 - III. Publish accurate, up-to-date and disaggregated data and information on the size and profiles of the stateless populations in Laos PDR and the barriers these populations face in acquiring or confirming citizenship;
 - IV. Ensure free universal birth registration in Laos PDR, as a tool for protecting the right to a nationality and preventing statelessness, including implementing mobile or postal birth registration services to assist those populations in remote or regional areas, in particular those belonging to the Hmong Ethnic Group;
 - V. Continue its efforts in raising awareness of statelessness issues to promote participation by the population in birth registration procedures;
 - VI. Provide for unrestricted freedom of information, opinion and expression and foster and support civil society engagement in the issue of statelessness.

Survey 2011–2012 (Vientiane, December 2012), p. 238, available at: <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR268/FR268.pdf>.

⁴⁰ UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Submission by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees For the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Compilation Report – Universal Periodic Review: Lao People's Democratic Republic*, June 2014, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/54c0d9414.html>